

# Speak

YAL Book/Film Talk by Heather Teater

## The Book:

- Written by Laurie Halse Anderson
- Originally published on Oct. 22, 1999
- Published by Square Fish, an imprint of MacMillan
- Young Adult Fiction, “Problem” novel
- Censored book, 60<sup>th</sup> on top 100 banned books
- Many awards and honors, such as National Book Award Finalist

*Speak* is the story of Melinda Sordino. She is raped at a party before high school. All of the students know that she called 911, but she does not explain why. She becomes an outcast because she ruined the party and got many students in trouble. For the most part, she decides to stop speaking.

## Writing Elements and Techniques:

- First person perspective
- Young and realistic writing style
- Mood alternates between heavy, dark and light and sarcastic
- Symbolism: lips, trees, closet
- Foil: David Petrakis
- Major theme: Overcoming adversity by speaking up

## The Movie:

- Originally released on January 20, 2004
- Stars Kristen Stewart as Melinda
- Director: Jessica Sharzer
- Producers: Jessica Sharzer, Fred Berner, and Matthew Myers
- Filmed in Columbus, Ohio
- Considered Drama or Indie film
- Rated PG-13 for Mature Thematic Material
- Released by Showtime Entertainment
- Also nominated for some film festival awards

## Cinematic Elements and Techniques:

- Voice-overs
- Close-ups
- Soft focus around Melinda
- High angle often for Melinda, Low angle for teachers/parents
- Ominous music for threatening characters
- Pan across lunch room or school bus shows responses of numerous students simultaneously

#### Book and Film Comparison:

- A strength of the book is the power of experiencing Melinda's perspective
- A strength of the movie is the ability to explore the reactions of other characters
- The movie has more depth when used as a complement to the book, in my opinion
- Few drastic changes between book and movie

#### Implementation in the Classroom:

- Discussion of Symbolism
- Images and discussion of art
  - Melinda's art or famous artists, such as Picasso
- Sound or lack of sound
- Creative writing
  - From the perspective of other characters
- Digital
  - Blog entries about prompts from this book or from other characters
  - Video acting out scenes from this book

#### Why read this book and watch this movie?

- Potentially life-changing
- Readable and relevant
- Answers to unanswered questions
  - Will Melinda speak?
  - What will happen with her?
  - Is there something between Melinda and David Petrakis?

